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SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E:PFIERST AND MWALSH, NAIROBI FOR SOMALIA  
REPORTING OFFICERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2029

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SUBJECT: FRANCE'S APPROACH TO SOMALILAND AND PUNTLAND

REF: STATE 92938 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew R. Young, for reason 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

11. (C) Summary: France has diplomatic engagements with Somaliland at a number of levels, including visits to Hargeisa by the French Ambassador and others based in Djibouti. France is helping Somaliland establish a representational "bureau" in Paris. France provides some developmental and humanitarian assistance to Somaliland that is managed from the French Embassy in Nairobi. France is pushing for Somaliland national elections to take place on September 27, even without the donor-funded voter registration lists. France does not have routine contact with Puntland officials and is not yet convinced that the government is serious about combating piracy. Puntland and southern Somalia receive the majority of French humanitarian assistance, mostly emergency food aid, through a program also managed by the French Embassy in Nairobi. This message contains an action request for AF (see para 9). End summary.

12. (SBU) In response to reftel demarche, Africa-Watcher discussed France's foreign policy approaches to Somaliland and Puntland with Vincent Astoux, the MFA's Desk Officer for Somalia and Djibouti. Paris DAO is reporting its discussions on this topic with MOD officials through separate channels.

#### FRANCE AND SOMALILAND

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13. (C) France maintains a fairly robust interaction with senior Somaliland officials and is currently concluding steps for the establishment of a Somaliland representational "bureau" in Paris. The French Ambassador to Djibouti travels to Hargeisa three to four times per year, and other French diplomats from that embassy make similar visits. France does provide some development and humanitarian assistance to Somaliland, though Astoux did not have details. Those programs are managed from the French Embassy in Nairobi.

14. (C) Currently, France is focused on assuring that Somaliland's September 27 national elections take place without further delay. France contributed approximately Euro 4 million to the EU fund for establishing the voter registration list. France is not happy that President Riyale has said the election will take place without using that list. However, France is constrained in raising this as a

significant problem because both Norway and Sweden are opposed to making it an issue that could disrupt the elections. Astoux noted that France was not satisfied with NGO Inter-Peace's management of the registration process -- they tried to do too much, including establishing biometric databases, in a bid to spend all the money, rather than assuring there was a simple registration process that would be recognized by all the parties. Astoux explained that France can accept the election going forward without a voter registration list, as happened in the previous two presidential elections, but the French insist that the election must take place on time.

¶15. (C) France has a nuanced policy on Somaliland independence, whereby it maintains what Astoux described as "factual relations," but with no plans for recognizing Somaliland independence. At the same time, France is supporting Somaliland's progress on development, security, and democracy and views it as an example for the entire region.

#### FRANCE AND PUNTLAND

¶16. (C) France does not maintain any direct links with Puntland officials, but will talk to them on an ad-hoc basis. Astoux said that French officials have noted Puntland's "new Washington, DC-based public relations firm" has been very active and effective at raising Puntland's profile, especially via Puntland President Mohammad Adde Muse Hersi's visit to Washington and the U.S. Congress (Hersi did not visit Paris). However, France has not seen any significant improvements on the ground. Puntland's government does not have the resources, or perhaps the political will, to actually fight piracy, and "important people" in Puntland are maintaining their links with pirates.

¶17. (C) Astoux noted that Puntland remains very dangerous and French officials do not typically travel there. France remains wary of providing security assistance to Puntland without further proof that the government can and will use such assistance effectively. Astoux said the experience of a recent UNDP project that provided assistance to the Puntland Coast Guard only to have the boats and equipment be used for piracy is one reason for the GOF's reluctance.

¶18. (C) France provides Euro 6 million in humanitarian assistance to Somalia (mostly emergency food aid) that goes mostly to the Puntland region and Southern Somalia via NGOs and the World Food Program. Astoux did not have any details on this assistance, which is also managed from France's Embassy in Nairobi.

#### QUESTIONS ON USG POLICY TOWARDS SOMALIA

¶19. (C) Action Request: Astoux raised the following questions on U.S. policy. First, is the U.S. going to accept Somalia's new name, Federal Republic of Somalia, which came out of TFG Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke's recent visit to Galkayo? Second, what is our position to the proposal put forth by UN Special Representative for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah for the creation of a "Green Zone" in Mogadishu to house high-level Contact Group representatives? (Note: Astoux noted that Italy is planning to reopen its Embassy in Mogadishu, but it was not clear if that is tied to the Green Zone concept. End note.)

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